

**Intervention at the ECOSOC Presidency
Briefing for Civil Society
4 May 2020**

By Liberato C. Bautista, CoNGO President

Your excellency, Ambassador Susan Eckey,
Civil society colleagues,
Ladies, gentlemen, and friends,

Good morning.

My name is Liberato Bautista, President of CoNGO—the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. I want to thank the Presidency and the Bureau of ECOSOC for holding this briefing.

CoNGO—in general consultative status with ECOSOC—was founded in 1948 on the fundamental premise that NGOs in consultative relationship with the UN enjoy the fullest opportunities and all appropriate facilities for performing their consultative functions. We foster cooperation and provide a forum for ongoing substantive dialogue and collaboration by NGOs with entities of the UN System.

Today's briefing demonstrates the necessity of such dialogue and collaboration.

I therefore welcome the ECOSOC President's initiative to keep civil society abreast of latest developments with regard to ECOSOC processes in these challenging times.

CoNGO affirms what Ambassador Mona Juul, ECOSOC President, said in her letter convening this meeting. She wanted to ensure "that intergovernmental meetings resume and deliver on their important role to support international cooperation and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development regardless of the situation."

Regardless of the situation, your excellencies, will have to mean that while the virulent pandemic continues its ravaging effects on people's lives and livelihoods, and is preventing us from meeting in person, we must find ways so that the future is not eventually relegated to virtual meetings.

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Your excellency, please ensure that the voice of civil society is heard at ECOSOC bodies, even as modalities for intergovernmental meetings may be abbreviated and adjusted. Our members and NGO substantive committees stand ready to work with you on such modalities for participation.

Regardless of the situation, a number of NGOs should be included to speak at specific times during ECOSOC sessions, especially at general debates. NGO voice is crucial at the HLPF meetings, be it virtual or physical.

Your excellency, the work of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs is crucial to the presenting of NGO voice and expertise at the UN. I encourage the Council to set new dates in 2020 in order to allow the Committee to perform its important work for the NGO community and to prevent an unmanageable backlog for its work next year.

The Council's mission is crucial. It must rise to the occasion and not allow the virulent pandemic to dilute its noble purposes. The virus may be invisible, but its fatalities stare us in the face. We must therefore recommit to the importance of multilateral cooperation to combat this pandemic, even as we continue to address the ongoing challenges of global forced migration, global climate change, global poverty, and global unpeace.

Policy-making in a time of pandemic must strengthen our resolve to work together to address underlying fundamental inequalities in our society that hinder the full realization of the SDGs. In this important task, a genuine engagement of civil society at the national and global levels is primordial. It is in keeping with an all-of-government and whole of society approaches that affirm human rights.

Please know, your excellency, of the willingness of NGOs in consultative relations with the UN to continue to play their part in support of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

In this 75th year of the UN, you can count on us to recommit to a UN that is responsive, transparent and accountable so that we can define the present and shape the future of the world we need and want.

Liberato C. Bautista president@ngocongo.org

New Jersey, 4 May 2020

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